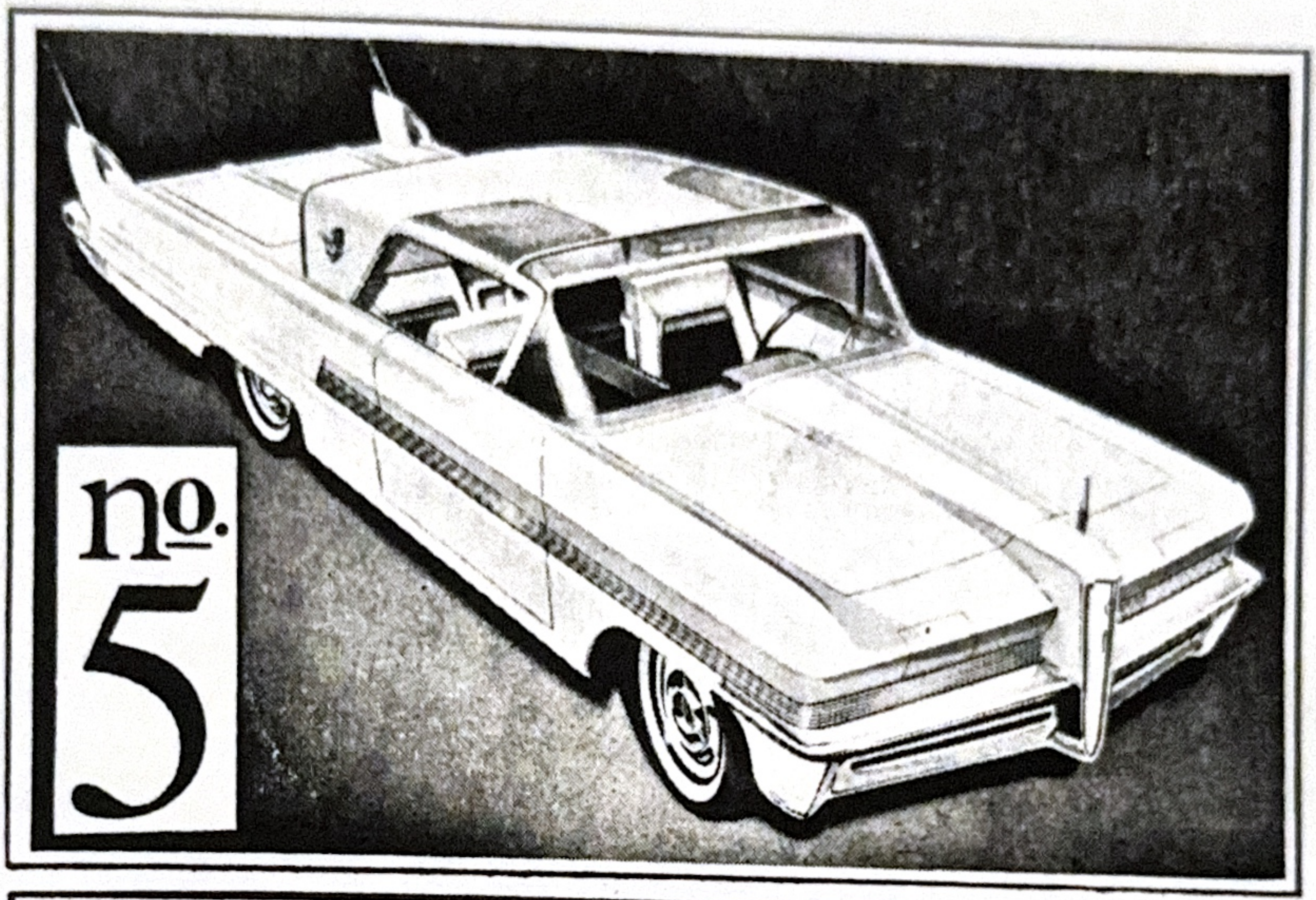
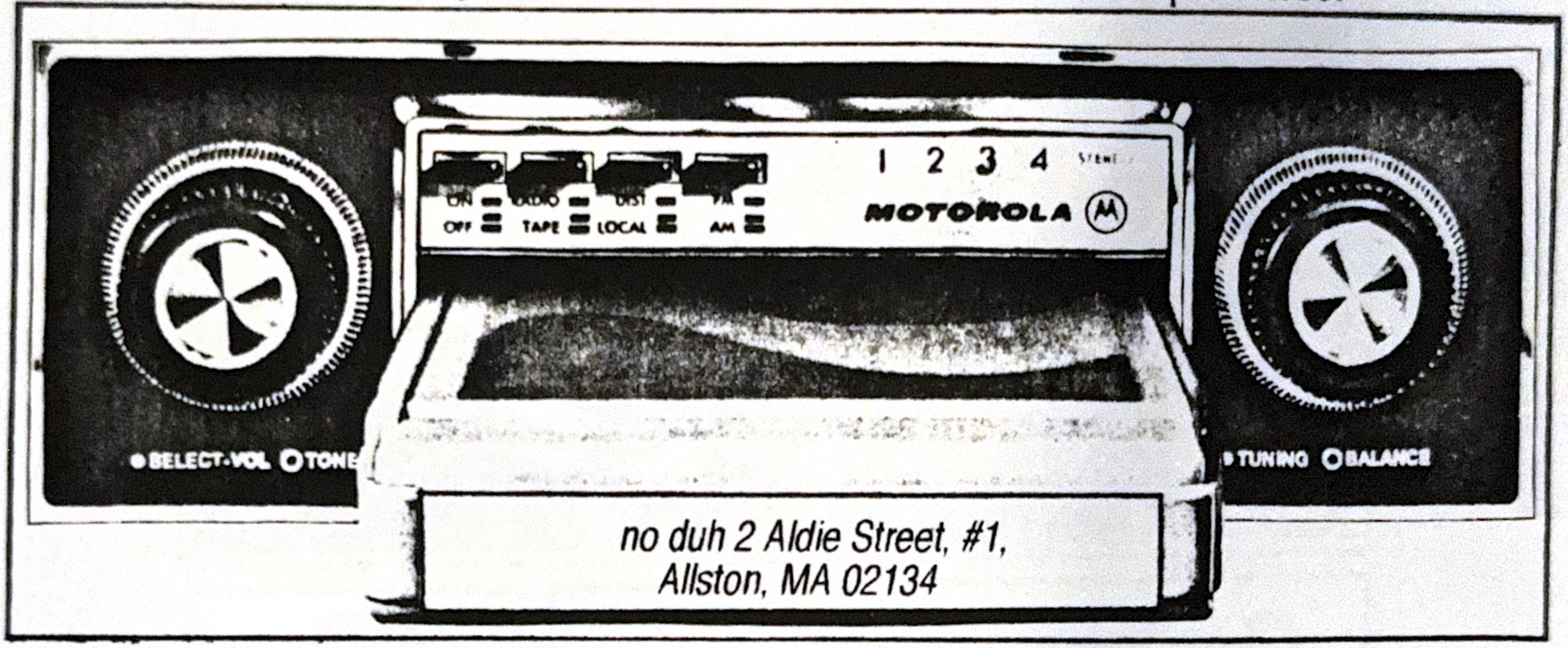
NO DUH



Go fast while
you still can.

This is the fifth issue of no duh and it's about speed.

In it, we'll talk to my friend Rex about bike wrecks, raked-out front forks and his bully big brother. Then you can read about John Badge's harrowing experiences as a rookie cab driver in Reno, Greta Mudflap's intoxicated Halloween bike ordeal, Sara Lorimer's Olympia all-nighters, Charlie Moats' thoughts on America and your mom, and Kate Taylor's recollection of her experiences as the producer of the raddest kids show ever: Zoom! I'll also tell you about some fun people who picked me up along the highway, the truth about Boston's Coffee Connection and let you in on the secrets to good local mud on a budget. If that's not enough to keep you busy, we're off on another adventure through Boston, this one includes railroad tracks, a tricycle ride and even a near-death experience!



no duh 2 Aldie Street, #1,
Allston, MA 02134

Originally, I thought of doing an issue about speed so I could tell stories about wired bike experiences and have an excuse for going someplace different for coffee every day. I wrote some of the stories and they came out OK, but more than anything they started me thinking about how things go *too* fast sometimes. I started to think about the people who almost run me down in Boston, driving so fast from one place to another, never slowing down to check out all the great stuff that happens in between the high-rise offices and the burbs. I also started to think about the people I meet in the coffee joints who talk so fast that I can only understand every other word, and the even more present people who talk so slow and deliberate, but tend to say so much.

It's really easy to go about your life like you only have so much time allotted to do so many things. Personally, I want to read every Thomas Pynchon book, put out a hundred zines and roam around every town in the world before I die. You see it every day in the city, people walking so fast looking firmly ahead, always late for something. Everyone seems to be planning their life for a living.

Well, this is the issue without a plan. A lot of roaming around Boston and other places went into this issue, and I sort of just let things unfold as they will. One thing I found is that life happens naturally with vigor, if you let it. I've been realizing that things go by fast and it's easy to miss the details if your thinking about the future. So, in a sense, this issue sort of wrote itself and I just ripped off the glue sticks. Hope you dig it...

The Cheapest Bean in Beantown...

Recently the Boston Phoenix ran a feature called "Coffee Wars." From my first glance at the giant painterly coffee cup on the front of the Styles section, I was skeptical. Sure enough, the article assumed its readers to be cellular phone-wielding Newbury Street-dwelling yuppies and offered no information of places where most of us could afford coffee on a regular basis. Places like the Coffee Connection and Espresso Royale are just out of hand with sky-high prices and aloof coffee-snobbery. Even the new ultra-hip Other Side Cafe on Newbury Street asks a buck and a quarter for a large coffee that's almost half the size of Dunkin Donut's dollar-ten Big One down the street. Granted it's good coffee and you can drink it on a couch, but what would be really hip is coffee for under a buck. For a cheap coffee that good I'd even flow the two bits as a tip when I had it.

Unfortunately, most of the new coffee joints that are popping up around Boston and market themselves as cool hang out spots just want your money more than anything. That's not to say there's not a place where your average punk can get a cheap cup of coffee. You may have to forgo the gourmet French Roast, but hey, bitterness and mediocrity are part of life.

Sami's, as in Sami's all night falafel stand, just happens to have a little corner store on Summer Street right off The Commons where they sell lottery tickets and have coffee for a quarter. The coffee is chalky, bitter and strong and has all the wonderful qualities of a cheap cup of coffee. The sign says "Introductory Offer," so it may be gone by the time you read this. Unfortunately, unlike its twenty-four hour Longwood cohort, this Sami's closes early.

Central Square in Cambridge provides a Mecca of coffee dives. None, however, sport the free refill. Tas-T Sub Shop, not to be confused with the famous diners in Harvard Square or DC, has a large coffee for eighty cents, but the waitress is mysteriously friendly and the place is a little too clean and sterile for my blood. If you get the window table you can watch all the people frantically run for the bus at the bus stop right outside. Next store at Breakfast Plus a large coffee is a bit more expensive, but the waitress is nice and nasty. The place is a bit small and dumpier, and if I remember correctly they have a serious breakfast special.

On the same block is Golden Donut, which used to be Twin Donut and have free refills. There you can get a large cup of fair mud for under a buck, but the refills are lost forever. The counters look like peninsulas so you have no choice but to stare at the ugly mug of the bum sitting across from you, which sometimes can make your morning coffee a bit more provocative.

Across the street at Harvard Donut, it's nice and filthy and they're fairly mean, at least to a skinny white kid like myself. One step inside and you get the idea that someone doesn't want you to be there. It's dark and eerie inside, more like a coffee cave than a coffee shop. It's the type of donut joint that usually doesn't have many donuts, and you get the idea that you're drinking coffee in someone's garage. The prices are strange too: sixty-seven cents for a small coffee and seventy-six for a large.

Of course, for the purist, there's a Dunkin Donuts in Central Square, but you have to swing a dollar-ten for a large. This Dunkin Donuts happens to be right next to the Bus Number Seventy bus stop. Bus number seventy is well known for being the main source of transportation for violent derelicts and insane people, (see no duh #2). This Dunkin Donuts is usually full of Bus Number Seventy passengers. Sometimes when you're bored, it's worth the extra dime for the show. If you're hungry, buy the donut that looks like a Q and you get the extra bite, no charge.

Coffee
and none better

Allston is the area breakfast capitol in my book. Since a blaring Billy Joel song drove me out of Harry's Diner on Western Avenue last winter, I've made it a point to stay away. A recent visit changed my attitude all together. Harry's proudly sports great coffee for under a buck, as well as the prized free refill, and choice Bebop has replaced the frightening early-eighties tunes.

Stay away from Steve's in Allston. The coffee is weak and, to make matters worse, they give it to you in a clear glass so it resembles tea. There's never any place to sit and it's always too hot from too many scenester-types talking shit. Seven Stars in Allston provides a break from the too-hip atmosphere of Steve's. The coffee is cheap and strong, and I find drinking coffee in the company of old men and construction workers adds to the breakfast experience. Besides, there's always a seat and you can hang for hours.

Of course one of the best cups of coffee in Allston comes from The Grecian. As an added bonus you can be waited on by Brenda, the most sarcastic waitress in Boston to my knowledge, (see no duh #3). Be challenged by Brenda's sardonic wit as you enjoy refill after refill. (A word of warning: Brenda will ask *you* if you need more coffee, not the other way around.)

Twin Donut in Union Square has bad coffee and the meager selection of donuts is stale. In the summer it's unbearably hot and in the winter it's freezing. It's the kind of place that looks closed when it's open and condemned when it's closed. However, some days you just feel closed, stale and condemned yourself, and that nihilistic part of you drags you up Brighton Avenue to Twin. There's usually a paper sitting around, anyway.

The Dunkin Donuts in Allston on Brighton Ave. is always open, unlike most of the other Dunkin Donuts in Boston. You can still get a serious amount of half-decent coffee for under a buck, and if it's not too busy you can usually hang out for quite a while. There's always a late-night gang war or yuppie cocaine-rumble in the Osco parking lot next store that you can watch from a safe distance.

If you're really broke, there are a few choice free-caffeinated beverage spots in the area. Oddly enough, free coffee and tea have been spotted at area sporting good stores, including the EMS on Commonwealth Avenue. Sporting goods stores usually lack the ambiance that you may associate with your caffeinated beverage, but Commonwealth Avenue is a long road to walk, and it's pretty cold these days...

Building 19, the suburban-white trash-freak show/junk store, has free coffee and non dairy creamer to boot. There's none in Boston, but they're apparently not hard to spot in the 'burbs. Get wired and shop for dumb things.

One of the more recent coffee houses at the Primal Plunge not only provided great free coffee, bagels and apple pie, but some street-smart blusey punk from one of the guys in Spore, and these two songs that kept me humming for a week by the owner of Hot Sugar, Susie, and one of the Swirlies. I think Susie put on the coffee house, and there's talk of them happening more often. Allston needs it, and not just for the free bean.

The next time your walking by the Coffee Connection on Newbury street feeling spiteful toward the yuppies blowing three bills on a Cappuccino, remember there's free coffee near by. The Vestibule at Friday's has a fresh pot of coffee just waiting for you, and lots of candy too, but it's only available after five. This coffee tastes great as far as free coffee goes. I'd hate to loose this convenient spot, so please be discreet.

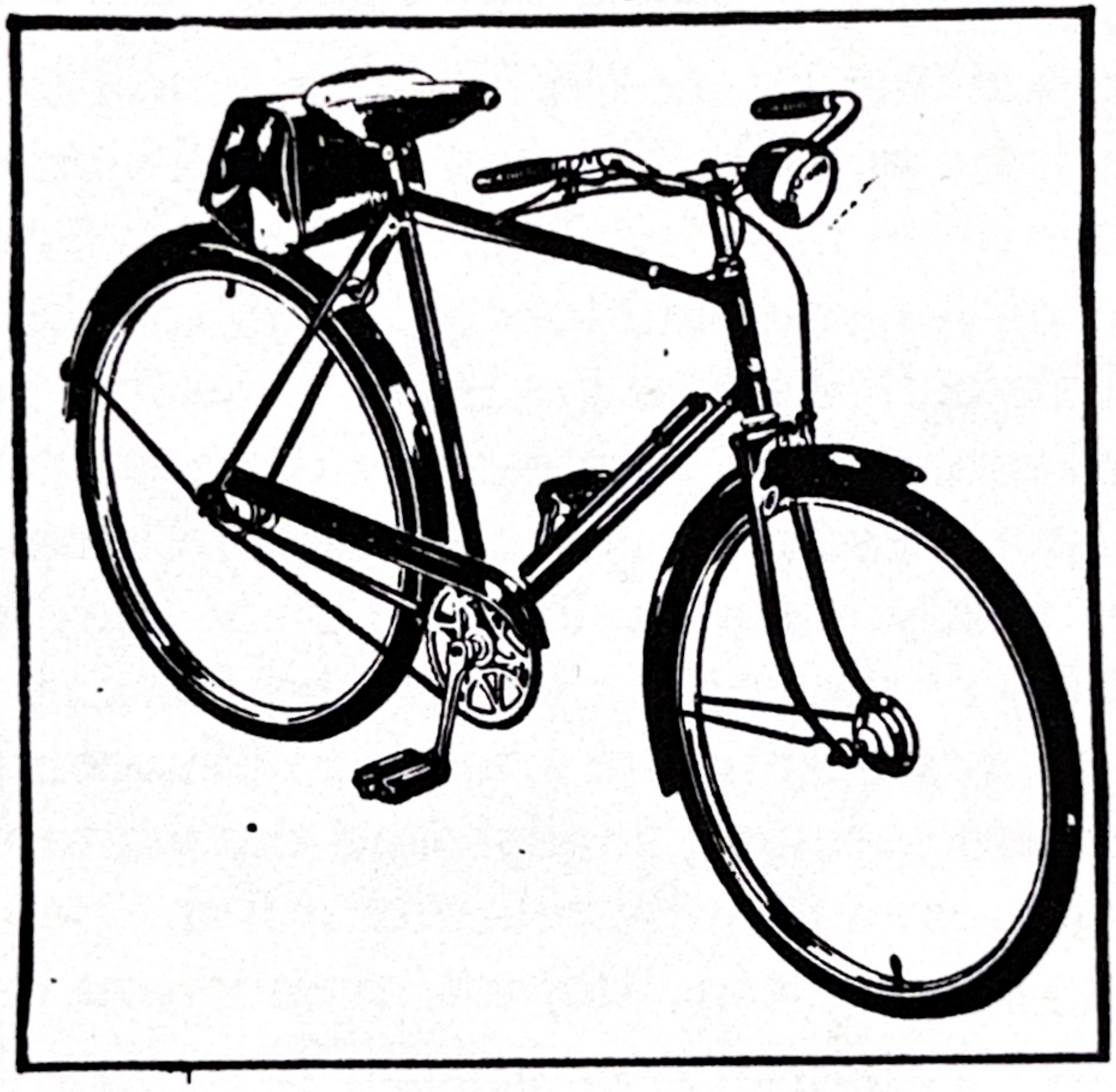
No duh's favorite spot these days is the Eatery in Chinatown where there's all the free tea that you can consume. Lately, they've been making it a bit stronger, especially at the stand that has the fish tank and the dead chickens in the window. It's best in the afternoon between two and five, when there's no one there speaking English and the white noise of all the other languages being spoken is quite relaxing. All the people at the food stands either smile at you or act indifferent, even if you hang all day.

Sometimes you wake up and see your breath. There are the mornings that you emerge from all the sleeping bags you piled on top of yourself the night before, and realize you are already wearing every garment you own to stay warm. It's too cold to go to the bathroom, let alone out for coffee. Mornings like these make you glad that you picked up a can of Cafe Du Monde coffee with chicory at the Hoy Toy Noodle Company in Chinatown. $2.99 for a fifteen ounce can is about the cheapest it gets, and there's something about drinking a cup of coffee with wood in it that just warms up those chilly winter mornings.

Well, that's the Bean Scene according to no duh. I think it's enough to keep you wired for a while. This list isn't comprehensive by any means. I know there are places around Harvard Square, the North End and Downtown that flow cheap caffeine, but I'll leave those for you to find on your own. If you roam around Boston long enough, walk into places that look interesting and keep seeking the elusive free refill, I'm sure you'll find your own coffee bargains. Don't forget to clue me in!

ALWAYS
GOOD COFFEE

Rex and the Art of Bicycle Maintenance



I've been meaning to ask Rex some questions about bikes ever since the night he found me huddled over a mess of tangled spokes and rims and looked down at me as if I had gotten my hand stuck in the cookie jar. He ended up staying up with me until three that morning, talking me through it step by step, until I had miraculously transformed the mess into a shiny, taut new wheel. Originally, I planned to ask Rex about bike maintenance, but Rex was pretty baked and ended up talking mostly about near-death bike experiences and banana-seat choppers, which don't require much maintenance anyway.

ND: Can you tell me how you learned about the bike wheel while driving to Canada in a VW bus?

R: I wasn't driving. I was a passenger. I was looking at two thousand miles of highway through a floor beneath my feet.

ND: It was rusted out?

R: Kind of. It was undergoing an eight year customization.

ND: So how did you learn?

R: My dad threw this pile of stuff at me and said, "You want to be able to roll, you gotta build this wheel."

ND: Do you think that the bike wheel is going to be around forever, or do you think that they will build something better?

R: Well, they try and build things better...sometimes it can be better, but nothings more beautiful. It's not just having a wheel, it's building a wheel.

ND: Do spoken wheels on a motorcycle work the same way, with all the internal tension?

R: Yeah. In fact you can get spoke wrenches that range...like from racing bike, then you have mountain bike, then you have BMX, then you have motorcycle. You can get spoke wrenches that just have them all on it.

ND: You used to have a bike that had a steering wheel instead of handle bars?

R: I didn't. The tough kid that I envied had one. I always wanted to be the tough kid. When I was in elementary school...second grade or third grade...the tough kid had this bicycle that was like a chopper, but it had a steering wheel. It was a round metallic-blue coated steering wheel. He used to do wheelies about twenty feet long and spin the steering wheel in circles! The front wheel just went flying like a helicopter.

ND: Were the forks long?

R: Oh, they were raked-out! He ripped them off of some grown-ups bike!

ND: Tell me about when you were riding your bike down by the river and you got hit by that guy who threatened to beat you up and your shoe came off and went into the river.

R: I'm going down the river and it had to be a weekend day or a holiday because all the tourists were on the bike path. You know how horrible it can be when there are three or four people are having a conversation and they're blocking the whole path. (sarcastically) They keep getting annoyed at all the joggers and the cyclists who are interrupting their conversations because they want to get by...on their bike path that they're walking on! But, it was weird. I was going along and their were these two tourists who think the whole strip is theirs. I go to pass them...I'm on their left but they don't care. One of them broad-sides me and plows me sideways. I had toe clips and I just flew up and basically did a somersault in the air. In trying to save myself from the coming down, I pulled my foot from the petal so fast that my shoe fell off at the top of the arc of the circle and went flying into the Charles river...like twenty feet off of the path. I came down on one foot, smashing my heel. Then my bike came down.

ND: Did you find the shoe?

R: No, it went flying over the grass into the water. Then the guy got off and said "I oughta punch your head and throw your bike in the river for being so stupid!"

ND: Did you kick his ass?

R: Well...there were two of them and they were just being so idiotic. They kept saying "You know I did it cuz your stupid and you have a hole in your nose!".

"That's why you hit me?"

"Yeah...cuz your stupid! Your fucked up! You gotta ring in your nose and I oughta rip it out and throw your bike in the river!"

ND: So, did they split and leave you alone after a while?

R: Well, at first I was winded and there were all these people saying "Oh no...are you OK?" It's like I'm lying on the ground and these guys want to pick a fight with me while I'm lying on the ground...without a shoe! It took me like three weeks before I threw out the other shoe because I kept going back to the river looking for it. "Maybe they mowed the grass and I'll find my shoe!"

ND: Did you ever have a 5-speed with the shifter in the middle?

R: No, I didn't. I never had a first bike that wasn't actually my brothers first...until my BMX bike. When I was a kid I got a paper route and got myself a BMX bike. It was a Mongoose.

ND: Did it have those cool metal mag wheels?

R: No...it had black Skyway wheels! Yeah, Toughwheels. Then I got the Z-Rims. The Z-Rims were cool...they were like Toughwheel material rims with spokes...and a beautiful brass-colored wide-flange hub. So, I had blue rims with gold hubs! Black tires.

ND: What was your most frightening bike experience ever?

R: There was the time when a guy ran a light on Memorial drive when I was crossing...this was on my BMX bike. I used to hop-fly up curbs. I was crossing when there was a red light and somebody decided that it was not important enough for them to wait...so they just floored it and came at me. It was like someone was showing me a series of instant Polaroids that were slowly developing before my eyes...just frame by frame with nothing in between. The next thing I know I'm like twenty feet in the air and my leg is stinging! I'm looking down at my bike which is kinda shaped like the front of his car. It seemed like before I hit the ground this old man was outside his car already, screaming at me for being in his way! Where I went, there was a crosswalk...it was kind of in a weird place.

Wait...that wasn't it though.

ND: That wasn't your scariest bike experience?

R: No, it was when I was five years old, actually. That one was more than just a bruised leg. It was weird. My brother used to always ditch me. When we moved into this new neighborhood, I'd go out and meet the kids and my brother would say "No way...they can't be your friends because I'm older! I get to choose my friends first and my friends don't like you!" So, he made all the kids in the neighborhood not like me. So, they came up with this game called "Chase". It started out as like "1,2,3...split!" and they would all ditch me and know where they were going to meet. Then they had this code...like "free, tree, three!". Right before they said "three" meant where they were going to meet. One time it was on bicycles...so they all ditched on bikes. I went and got mine and followed them. We went all around and we're coming down this hill, and they all went around the corner. I went around the corner and there was this big blue van that came screaming down the street. Then they were picking up my bike and I was crying and I was all bloody. They were carrying me back to my house and I was just like "what the fuck happened?" I thought that was all part of their deception trick...part of their evading me! I was so confused...I could just see red. I saw my bicycle and it was all mangled. I thought "God, I must look like that too!" I wouldn't look, but it actually was just like road-rash and stuff.

ND: What kind of bike was it?

R: It was the closest thing I had to a chopper. It had a slightly smaller front wheel, a banana seat and these big handlebars that went out like chopper bars, but when they got to the bend they did a loop-de-loop!

ND: Like Harley bars!

R: Yeah...they went up like three feet and then looped around to the handles!

ND: Tell me about internal tension and how a bike wheel is a representation of...other things.

R: That's changing gears.

ND: Good segue, Rex.

R: Well, you have a wheel...it's the hub with the wheel outside of the hub going around it. It needs to be in this balance tension or else it looks like a potato chip. For it to be smooth and round...and to work well, it needs to be brought together in balance. Anything you do to one part affects the whole thing. Like, it can be way out of true and all warped, and you adjust two spokes, out of thirty-two or thirty-six, and the whole thing can come together. It's like in that book, *Chaos,* he says "If you sneeze now it will affect the weather in Tokyo a month from now." But, it's more instantaneous than that. It's true, because everything has affects on everything that's happening.

ND: OK...how did you *really* learn about how to build a bike wheel?

R: My father and my mother were...they were getting very loud at the time, so suddenly, my brother and my father and I were on vacation. So, we're swept up and we're on vacation and we're going to bicycle from Banff to Jasper...they're two towns in Alberta, I don't know. These two towns, five hundred miles apart separated by unpopulated Rocky Mountains. There's just one highway. This was a voyage where I inherited one of my brothers bicycles...this silver Schwinn. It's called a Schwinn Voyager. And, my brother wore out all the parts on it. My fathers like "well, the frame is fine, but you have to put new parts on it. I'm driving and your brother's not old enough to drive, so you're going to have to fix this bike so you can ride." It was like, I'm not going to wait in some town in the middle of nowhere for three or four weeks waiting for my brother and my father, so I just...had to figure out how it happened. I would have advice coming from a man driving seventy-five miles an hour in a VW bus...which is like a dart trying to fly backwards! A VW bus wants to turn around! The slightest cross-wind and your going off the road. This mans driving close to eighty miles per hour on highways he doesn't know in the middle of the woods, telling me "Tighten that! You messed that up, fix that!"

ND: Did he say "Do all the inside spokes first?"

R: No, it was more like "See that wheel? It's got to look like that. If you can get it to look like that then that means everything's fine."

ND: Did he know what he was talking about?

R: I think he had an idea, but he felt that I was a child at that point, in his eyes. I was twelve years old. I had just gotten my first Sex Pistols record. I shaved my head with a razor and gave myself a mohawk and died it red. And then, I'm like scooped up and we're going to the most rural parts of Canada!

ND: So your folks were already a little pissed off?

R: My father didn't care. His rules when I was a kid were like "Whatever you want to do, just don't hurt yourself because I might get upset." So, I'm outside the bike shop and I'm getting bored because my father is very particular about what parts to get. I was just like "the shinier the part, the better." Anyway, I went outside the bike store and there's this kid and he's like "Mister, what kind of fucking haircut is that!?" So, I had to deal with this pesky kid, but he was a lot better than some of the rednecks.

ND: Any last words about bikes?

R: One thing I think is incredible is in the Tour De France a few years ago, Greg Lamonde averaged a speed of thirty four miles an hour. This meant that if he went down to twenty he would have to go up to fifty or something to compensate. For a human being to do that is quite something...especially after having his chest shot out by his brother in law with a shotgun. Bikes are very healing things. Half the US Olympic team at one point were people who were all told that they weren't going to be able to walk again. Biking is a healing thing. It's a productive thing. It can clean you out when your feeling stuffy. A lot of songs go through your head. It's a good way to write and think creatively. When I was a messenger and things were relaxed and cool, I used to hum the chorale to Beethoven's ninth. Then when things were in a crunch and I had to get from downtown to Harvard Square in ten minutes...it was like "My War!" and I'd get into this Black Flag thing. I'd project the song onto my dispatcher, "you say your my friend, but your one of them!"

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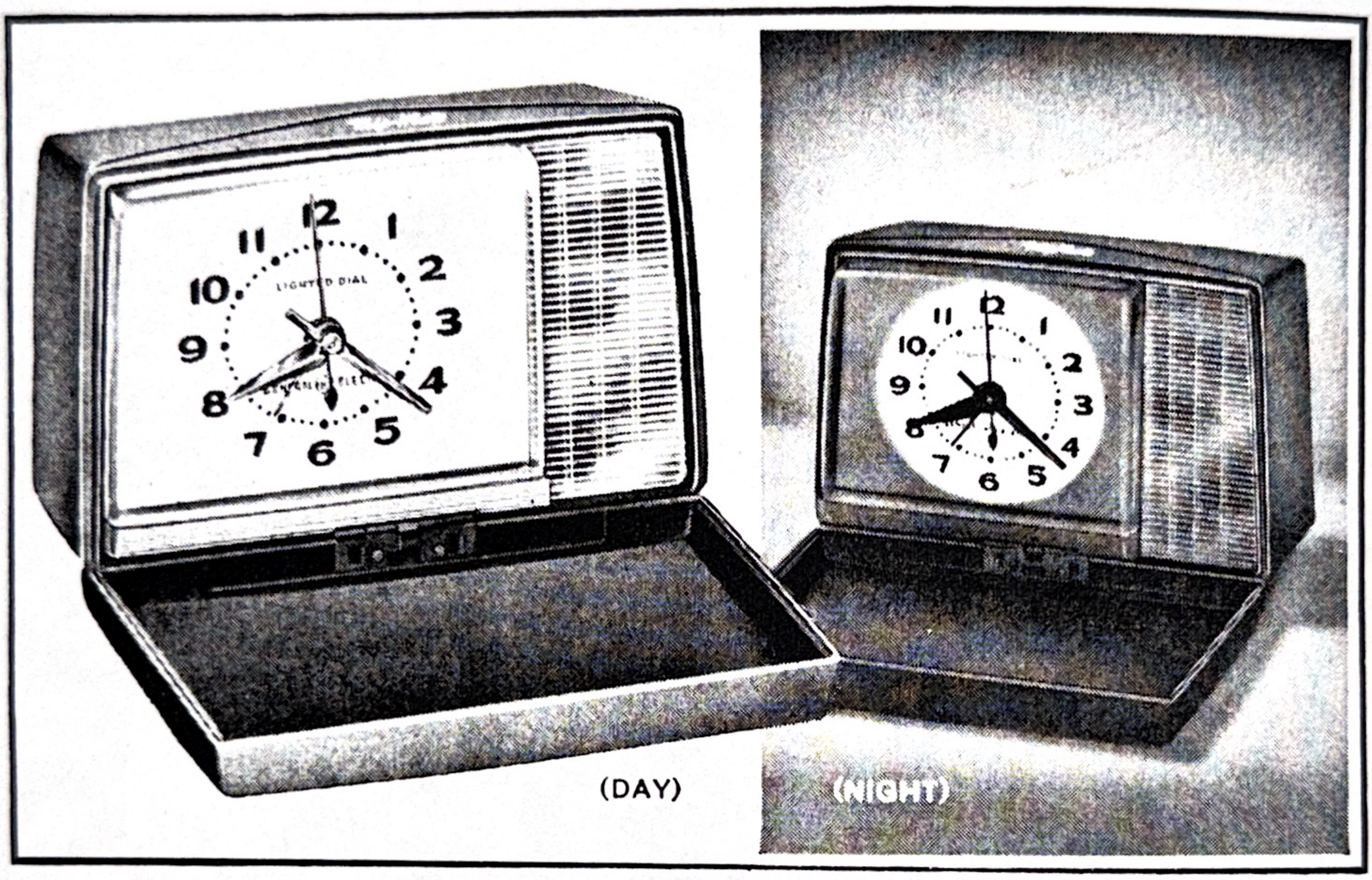
NONCONFIRMING NOSTALGIA
LEAVE IT QUICKLY
RT 7 ON MIND ON TIME
64 MERC HAS LINES ONLY A
COMET COULD TAKE
TAILLIGHT GLOWS RED ON HILL
12 HRS DOWN IN TEN

A.HOOVER

Time One: My first winter in Washington it rained for fourteen days and nights without stopping. I would wake up in the early hours of the morning and stare out my window, chain-smoking and watching as people did strange things to the bus-stop sign.

Some Times by Sara Lorimar



Time Two: I would think something, then think about what I just thought, and analyze it, then analyze why I had to analyze what I was thinking, while the digital numbers on the clock slowly flipped over and over...then I would fall asleep, worn out, an hour before I had to get up.

Time Three: We would stay up until six, seven, eight in the morning, talking, but as soon as my house mates would start to make their morning noises-drawers opening, trips to the toilet, snooze buttons being opened over and over-he would leave and go back to his place. We never told anyone.

Time Four: I had called the doctor to find out the results of my blood test for HIV. The receptionist put me on hold.

Time Five: It was negative.

Time Six: On Saturday nights he would pick me up after work, and we'd go back to my apartment-my roommate would be gone for the weekend and we'd have the place to ourselves. First, we'd make dinner, then we'd talk, watch a movie, or listen to music. Sex was always an option. Then we'd turn on the TV and I'd fall asleep on the living room floor. In the morning there'd be bagels and the Sunday paper.

The Paranoid Hitchhiker

No matter how hard I try, I've never been able to emulate the handsome and confident hitchhiker that I remember from TV and the movies: the rugged man in the warn leather bomber's jacket who could beckon a beautiful woman in a red Porche with the deft turn of his thumb. Unlike the stereotypical hitchhiker, I can be found standing on the side of the road in the middle of the winter hunched forward under the weight of my pack, unshaven and with a runny nose. Instead of getting the first ride, I usually let all the muscle-trucks with gunracks pass and wait for a VW bus with a Grateful Dead sticker or a beat up Pinto. Only when I feel totally confident I stick my thumb halfway out, careful not to be too obtrusive, and give the driver a meek smile. This goes on for at least an hour until I look so cold and pathetic that someone finally pities me enough to give me a ride.

I'm The Paranoid Hitchhiker. I know that the times that I pick up a hitchhiker, it's usually out of extreme guilt, pity or boredom. I can't imagine that anyone risks their life these days "just to be nice." After all, hitchhiking is scary. Anyone who would go out of there way to pick up a hitchhiker in this age of rape and murder has got to want something!

What follows are brief physical and psychological portraits of some drivers who have picked me up on a couple more memorable trips. In these driver cross-sections, no duh attempts to look for the real motivations of the drivers, and dispel the myth that people sometimes go out of their way just to be nice.

Driver #1 was a short guy in a thick flannel shirt who chain-smoked Camels and drove an old truck that was half made of wood. The passenger door on his truck was about to fall off, and I had a hard time keeping it shut.

It turns out that this guy used to be some sort of electrical engineer in LA, moved to Cape Cod to live a simpler life and became a carpenter. He also seemed to be interested in my life. He asked me if I went to school and what I did, and I gave him the usual vague story about just hanging out in Boston and not really doing anything.

And why did this guy give me a ride? I believe he felt like he could relate to me. He saw me as someone who was leaving the city to find the simplicity of nature and he could relate to this, having moved to The Cape for the same reason. What he didn't see was the poison oak and sore feet and that after two days in the woods all I wanted was to immerse myself in urban life once again.

P R N DRIVE L
CRUISE-O-MATIC

Driver #2 was at least seven feet tall. He drove a compact car and sat almost in the fetal position in the drivers seat. His knees almost hit the steering wheel and his face was so close to the windshield that he steamed it up.

This man was blatantly friendly, which put me on the defense from the start. When we talked, he turned his massive head toward me and looked right into my eyes. I could barely see his mouth through his huge beard. He asked me all sorts of questions about where I was going and I made sure my answers were either brief or lies.

Why would this man go out of his way for me? Well, I think it was because he sensed immediately that I cowered under his size and he knew that, if need be, he could take me with one hand still on the wheel.

Driver #3 was a young man who drove a station wagon that was barely running. The dashboard rattled violently every time he hit the breaks and, ironically, in this car also, it took a lot of effort to hold the door on my side from flying open.

At one point the guy said "Oh, I have to check something," and turned down this old dirt road. My first reaction was to grab the door handle, but it turns out that he was a fisherman and he had to "check what the tide was doing." This guy turned out to be the most well adjusted of the people who picked me up that day, at least from a hitchhikers point of view. He would talk a little about weather, then a little about fishing, then ask me a light question or two.

Why did this nice young man interrupt his day to give me a lift? Beats me. Why do well-adjusted people do anything?

Driver #4 was a middle aged man named Rob. He was a flaming homosexual. There were also two muscle-clad, tan, younger men in the back who were introduced to me as "those crazy, wacky guys," and were also blatantly gay. The car was a pastel-yellow BMW with tinted windows and mag wheels.

It was getting dark and I was twelve miles away from the Youth Hostel where I was staying. I was afraid that no one would pick me up. The reason these guys did became quite obvious as soon I got in the car, but they were friendly just the same. They gave me a tour of the area and the listening to the driver became quite entertaining after I defeated my initial bout with homophobia. "We were horsing around last week, me and those crazy, wacky guys, and I fractured my left clavicle! Can you imagine that?" I couldn't begin to imagine that. After I told Rob and those crazy, wacky guys that I really didn't have time for a ride on their Harleys, Rob finally dropped me at the doorstep of the Hostel.

Why did Rob go out of his way to pick me up? Duh...

Driver #5 was a woman who couldn't have been over twenty-five. She was totally obese, wore a pink polyester tank top, mint-green polyester slacks and about twenty colored metallic bracelets that, I later noticed, covered huge vertical scars on her wrists. She drove a beat up El Comino ninety miles an hour.

I was with my friend Doug, who fits the TV hitchhiker description. We were thumbing to the white mountains in Vermont and he had done all the hitching up until this ride. All of the rides he got were really nice people who told us good places to camp and gave us food. "Why don't you get us a ride?" Doug said. He waited patiently by our packs for an hour while I reluctantly tried to get us a ride. Finally this woman pulled over and almost hit us in the process. "I'll sit in the back this time, you can ride up front," Doug said.

Needless to say, I made Doug do the rest of the thumbing. This woman told me her life story as she chain smoked and topped-out the shuttering El Comino as I held on for my life. Every time she got to some tragedy in her life, (her only lover leaving her, her family disowning her, the death of a pet, etc.) her tone became spiteful and she would pull in front of another car and say something like, "Fucker can't drive worth shit."

It took me that weekend in the mountains and a few idealistic words from Doug to realize that she did not pick us up just to drag us down into her world of malice and hate. I'm pretty sure she just wanted someone to listen.

Driver #6 was the most enigmatic of the drivers. He was an older guy who didn't say a word the whole time, except for "Ya got yer home on yer back," as I shoved my pack in the back seat. He had on a Country and Western station that played two songs in a row about hitchhiking. One was called "Thanks for the ride," and the other had lyrics about hitchhiking from Boston to La, which made me wince after a tiring day of thumbing.

I don't know why this man picked me up. When I realized that he wasn't going to make conversation, I didn't either. Maybe he was just being nice, but I doubt it!

"...But sometimes you just don't WANT to slow down..."

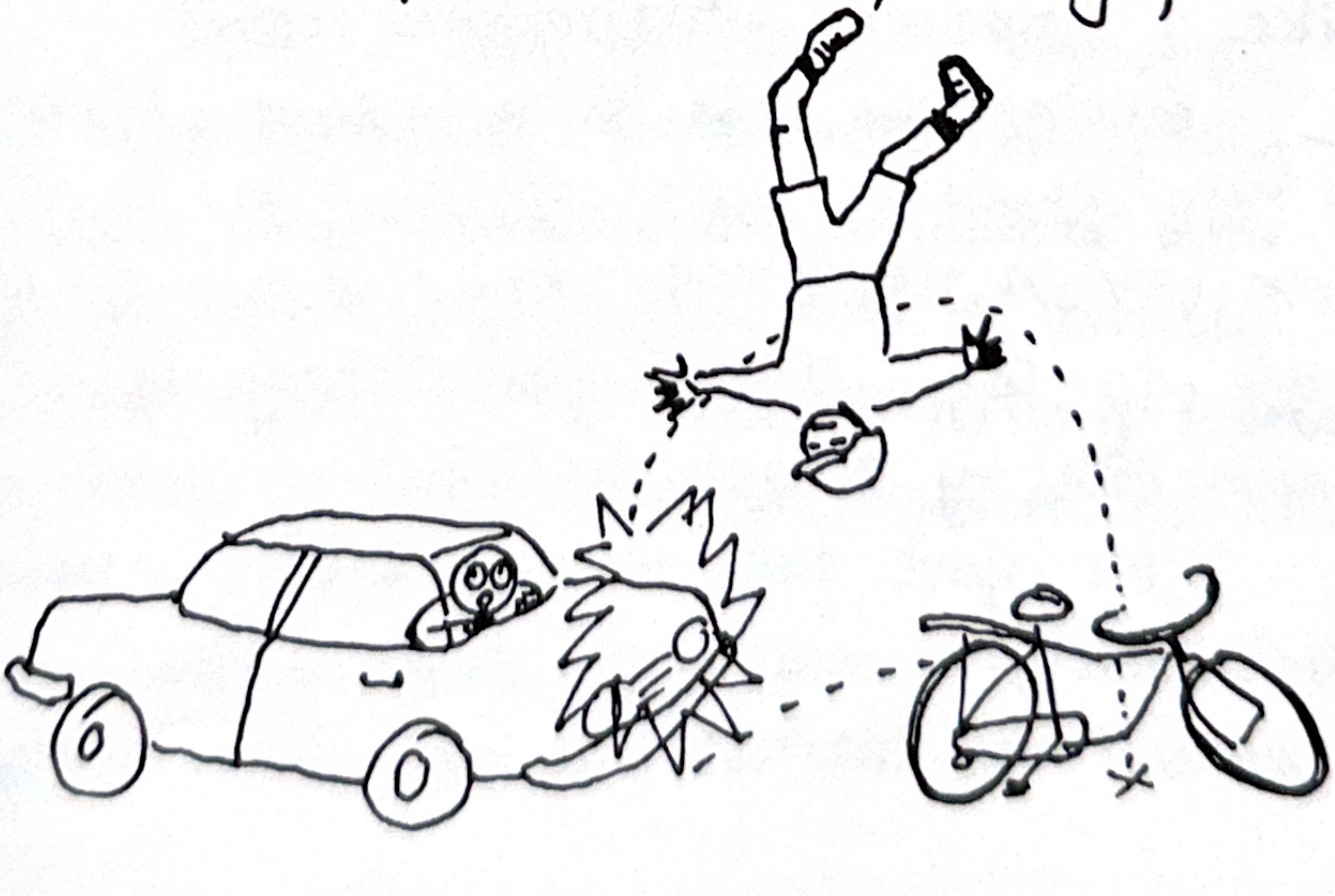
First let me say that we were off on this great adventure, (well, a wee little spur of the moment one, really). See, my friend Nosmo King got this T.V. that runs on batteries like a jambox. So we decided that, after work on Friday, the day before Halloween, we would ride our bikes over the Golden Gate Bridge to the woods, bring sleeping bags and my crusty old tent, and this TV so we could watch it. For some reason the idea of going to the woods with the battery TV and staying in the tent to watch "Murphy Brown" and "CHEERS" was really funny to us. It still is. So we drank about forty ounces and it was 9pm or so and we set out.

Up the first big hill, we stopped semi-drunkenly at the top of it. It's a really rich neighborhood, Franklin st. at Clay or thereabouts. We played around the lobby of this fancy building, spraying each other with the water bottles and being bums. Where to get the batteries? We held the T.V. like a grail.

Before going down the huge hill on the other side, we repeatedly agreed to go slow and be careful, but clearly we were not careful enough. This is the huge downhill, ~~the~~ part of the huge uphill we had just heaved over. It's really steep. So right towards the bottom, the King was 3 car lengths ahead of me and I guess he miscalculated his speed and the timing of the car in the intersection, and SLAM! He cartwheeled fully upside down in the mid air and landed in the absolute center of the intersection.

At that point all the cars disappeared from my view, and I'm surprised he didnt get hit again, or me, riding out and throwing my bike down. He was motionless and I thought he was dead. DEAD I tell you, it was horrifying. It was a direct hit.

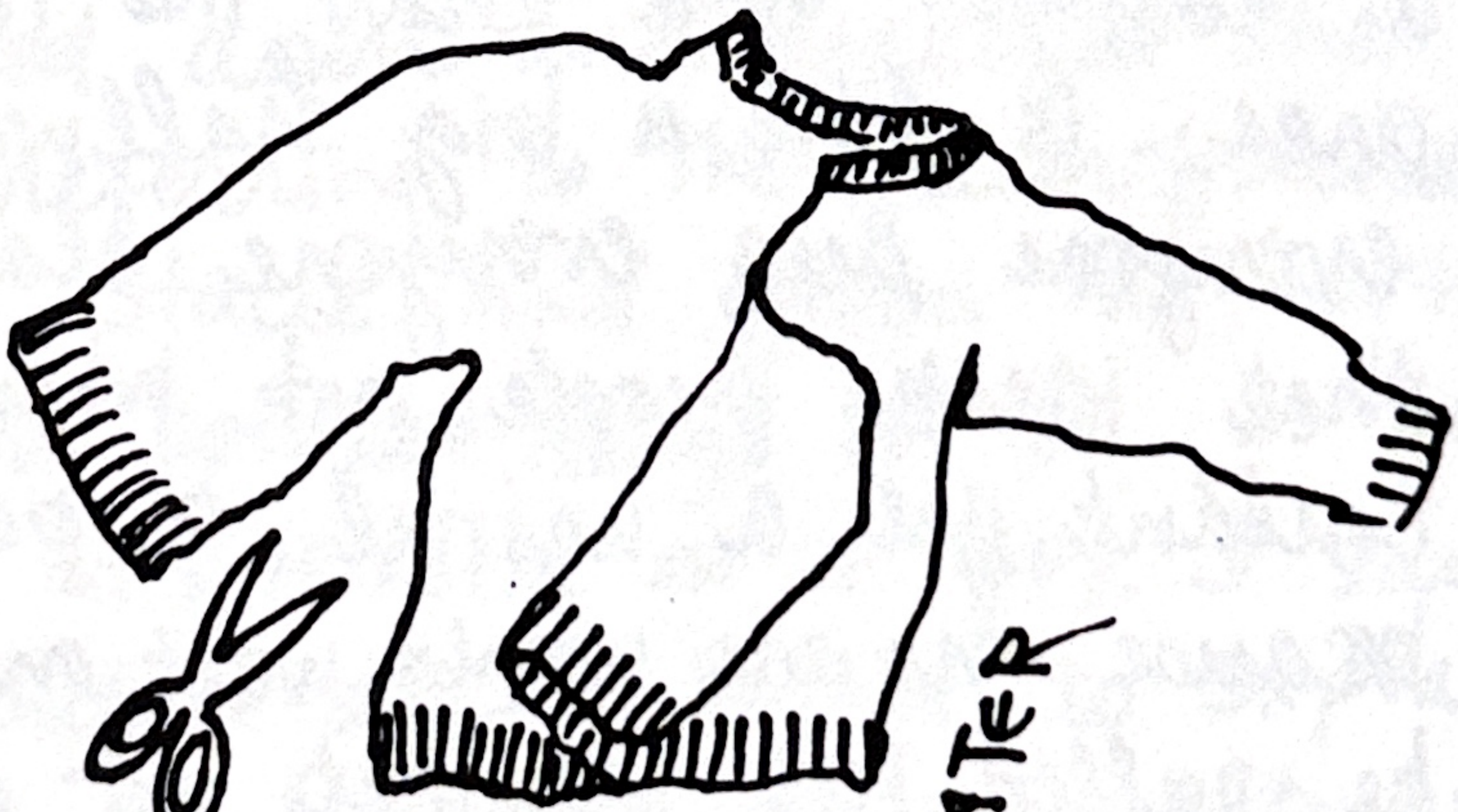
He responded to me, though,



and he wasn't all hella bloody... My prior ambulance instinct, I suppose, made me hold the two sides of his head and force him to lie still. A ped came out and said look at his legs! And sure enough, as I was immobilizing his head and chest, he was flailing his injured legs madly, one of which had clearly been broken and the foot was hanging awfully from a new joint in his midcalf. That ped woman then dutifully grabbed his knees and held his feet still. It was dark and cars were still weaving around us with headlights flashing. A doctor appeared and she began to ask NOSMO the brain-damage questions ("Do you know the date? Your name? Who's president?") while I held him from leaping up and saw that he wasn't crushed and seeping all over like I expected. Firefighters came.

"Greta you have to get me out of the street, I DONT WANNA GET RUN OVER BY A CAR!" the KING said. So I got to say "NOSMO you already BEEN run over by a car, dont worry about it."

We gave fake names ("yes my name is KING, NOSMO KING..."). The ambulance came. The car driver was nervously asserting that he had a green light (which he had). Nosmo was saying, "I'm sorry Greta." I really fucked up, huh." He was sweating and bleeding more now. The ambulance guys started to cut off the King's clothes, and it's funny because punks' clothing are so imbued in history and ritual, the King was saying "No, don't cut my shorts... (...my wool shorts that I wore at the skate hockey championship and Snotface vomitted on them and... etc.")



NOSMO'S SWEATER

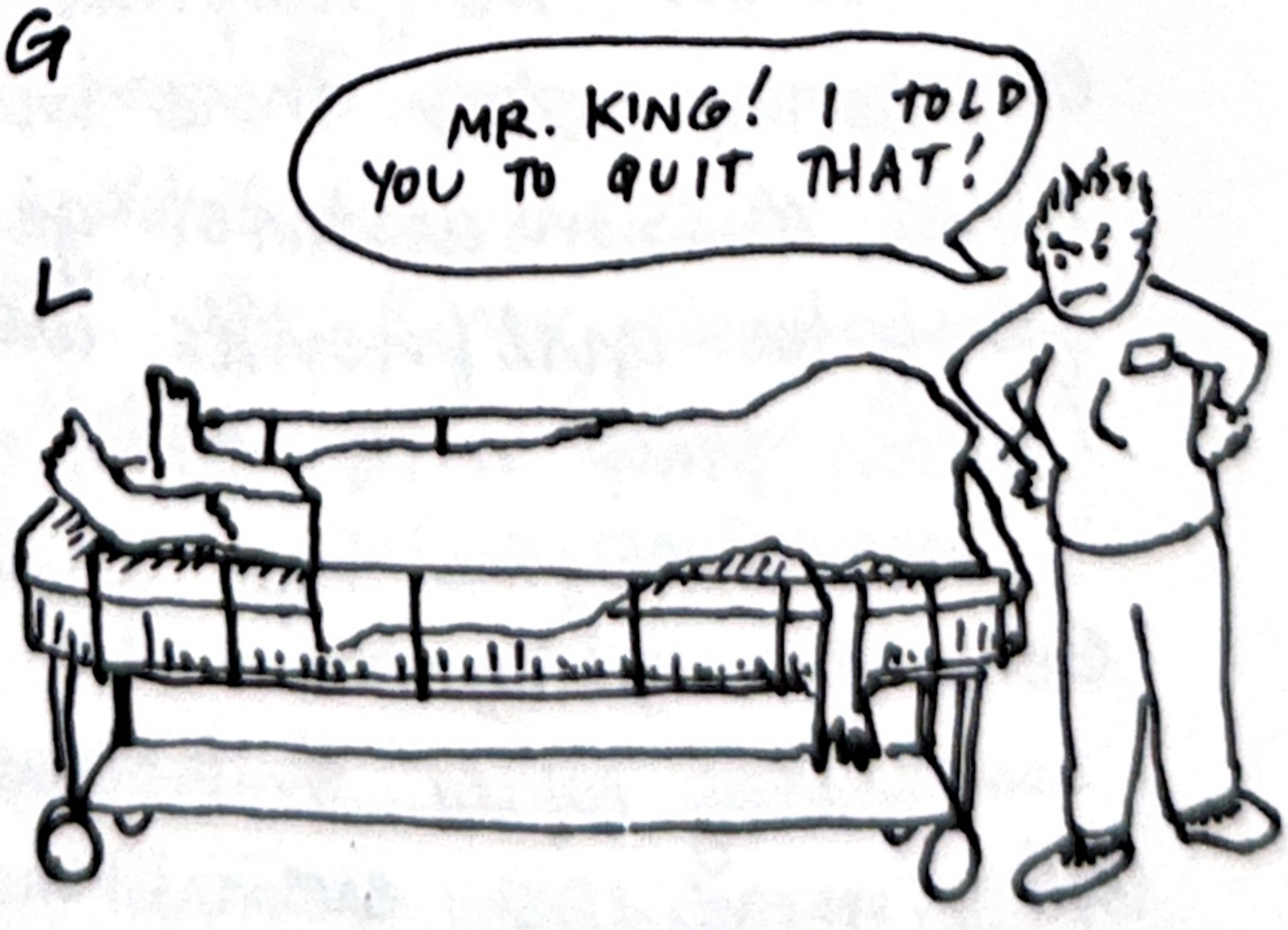
Then the hospital, SF General emergency room. There were shuffling winos, Mission district gangsters with gangster girlfriends, and a totally Cartoon pimp with three matching teenage whores. Everyone had a pager in the SF General waiting room.

Finally after 4 hours of nightmare where I didn't even have a DIME

FOR THE PHONE (the firefighters took all our stuff to the fire station to hang onto for us, unfortunately including all my change and stuff) I was allowed to see the KING. He was lucid, complaining, waiting for a cast to be put on his leg. Both bones broken.

He said "they really hate it when you do this..." and pulled the sheet up over his head like a corpse. You know the trauma area is like a big hallway so everyone sees everyone else, and that freaks people out. When he couldnt get a urinal to pee in, because no one would wait on him, he pulled his blanket off and rolled it up under his head, baring his

NOSMO KING
IN THE
HOSPITAL


MR. KING! I TOLD YOU TO QUIT THAT!

naked manliness to the whole trauma ward which certainly got him some attention. Pretty funny.

The one official person who paid any attention to him was a kind of big nurse who was pretty obviously a dyke. She was funny and loud and kind of gruff. She told me I had to leave now, so I leaned over to kiss the King goodbye and she boomed "I like your necklace!" I looked down and realized she was referring to the queer-friendship chain Stacie had given me, with rainbow colored rings on it. So then here I was kissing on a GUY. I said "oh" but I didn't bother to explain. Then I said "Bye punkin" to Nosmo, and the dyke nurse snorted "PUNKIN"? Is that what you said?" I was about to tell her to mind her own beeswax but Nosmo King just looked up at her with his innocent-boy eyes blinking and said, "Well it _is_ Halloween." which it was.

by Greta S.

GRETA'S ZINE IS 'MUDFLAP':
SEND A BUCK & 2 STAMPS TO:
666 ILL AVE., SF, CA 94107★

Zoom:

a retrospective

Zoom was the coolest show on TV. There was something magical about it that ranked it well above the dull, mind-numbing half-hours of *Welcome Back Kotter* and *What's Happening*. Maybe it was because Zoom was punk, America's only DIY TV show. Instead of pelting kids with useless entertainment and insulting morality, Zoom motivated with a simple and effective message: Turn off your TV and do something constructive.

After receiving countless letters acknowledging that no duh has the same zip code made famous by the Zoom song, I decided to try to get some information on the show. After finding out that Zoom was canceled in '82 before the wide use of transcripts and that the Zoom cards used by the show, as well as the famed Zoom book, were all unattainable, I decided to ask some friends. It turns out that just about everyone remembers something about Zoom. Most people remember the striped shirts that all the kids on the show wore and that they spoke Ubby Dubby language, but only a few ex- Zoom heads actually remembered how to speak Ubby Dubby and were distraught when they changed the color of the striped shirts after one of the seasons.

Fortunately for me, someone remembered that Kate Taylor was Zooms producer, and after a month of phone calls I was finally able to schedule the following interview. If you are like me and only remember bits and pieces of the show, this interview will definitely jog your memory. If your one of the few who are still fluent in Ubby Dubby, you will find a rare glimpse behind the scenes.

ND: Can you tell me about the history of Zoom? A lot of people just remember bits and pieces of it.

KT: All right...the history and kind of how it started was a guy who worked here named Chris Sarson who was a British man who actually happened to be the person who also is credited with having invented Masterpiece theater, from what I remember and understand. He was from Britain and he knew about a show called "Why Don't You Turn Off The TV and Do Something Less Boring"...that was the name of it. He liked that concept of television being not just a passive medium. The kids should not just be watching TV, they should be doing things and interacting. So, he had this idea...and again, this is from years ago and this is sort of the myth, as I know it. I did know Chris although I was not with the show the very first year. Chris basically had this idea where he would like to do a show where kids would be so inspired by what they saw, that they would want to turn the television off and go and do what ever it was that they had been shown how to do...have them being active. And then on top of that, to have a show where all the ideas were inspired by kids. Zoom was basically a program where almost everything on the show was sent in as ideas from kids...whether it would be a little play, a topic to discuss or a poem or a recipe...or a letter in the mail that would get read. Every kid that wrote in would get a *Zoom Card* , which had a picture of a cast member on it...and it might have something on it to do or the lyrics to a song or something like that...or they could request a particular Zoom card. We also had a language called Ubby Dubby, which was taught on the show. You could get a card back telling you how to speak Ubby Dubby.

So, basically that's how I know it. That's how the show was born. You know, coming up with this idea that television should be inter active. That kids could write in to get their ideas on the show and that kids could get things back in the mail. And also, that kids would want to do what was on the show.

ND: Where did you find the kids who were on the show?

KT: We did auditions, locally. I think you had to live fairly close to Boston...we might have had a route 128 radius or something like that. We would do, every spring this huge mass of auditions where we would rent a big room. They were open auditions so anybody could come. We would play with the kids and see what their acting skills were and put them through some exercises. We'd narrow it down and invite some back, and then invite some more back until a couple of auditions later we selected our cast. We were looking for kids who *weren't* professional actors, per say. Hardly any of the kids on the show had ever had any professional acting lessons. We were looking for kids to kind of play themselves. Obviously we needed a good mix of types of kids because we wanted all the kids in the audience to be able to identify with somebody.

ND: What were the ages of the kids that were on the show?

KT: If I remember...the youngest we ever had on the show were eight, and they went up to about twelve.

ND: How long did it go for and why was it canceled?

KT: It had five seasons and I think it was canceled basically because it had run it's course, you know. Five years is a long run for a show, actually. It became more and more expensive to produce, only because we got more sophisticated at doing it, and also just from inflation. It was hard to sustain the funding for it.

ND: Do you feel that it was successful?

KT: I think it was very successful. First of all, there were...I wish I remembered the figures, I don't have them, but I think we ended up getting maybe thousands of letters a week. Actually, that was one of the other things that became even more and more difficult about producing the show...was finding people to open the mail! It was also very expensive...not only did you have to open the mail and have personnel to do that, (at this point we had volunteers and it was a big job managing that operation), but then you had to pay the cost of the Zoom Cards to send back...and postage. At one point, I remember, we made a compromise by asking kids to send in a self addressed stamped envelope. But, even the kids who didn't send one in we sent back the Zoom Card because you didn't want to discriminate against kids who didn't understand that or didn't have access to the postage or whatever.

ND: Where was it shot?